



EMORY WMHP BLOG

Hale's Breastfeeding Safety Ratings: Part 2 – Antidepressants

Thomas Hale's *Medications and Mothers' Milk*, now in its 14th edition, has become the standard reference for the breastfeeding safety of medications. In this series, we provide a summary of Dr. Hale's ratings and recommendations for the major classes of psychiatric medications. In this entry in the series, we summarize Dr. Hale's findings regarding the safety of **Antidepressants** during breastfeeding.

Lactation Category	Generic Name	Brand Name(s)	Antidepressant Class	Relative Infant Dose
L2 - SAFER				
L2	Amitriptyline	Elavil	Tricyclic	1.9% - 2.8%
L2	Amoxapine	Asendin	Tetracyclic	Not reported
L2	Citalopram	Celexa	SSRI	3.6%
L2	Clomipramine	Anafranil	Tricyclic	2.8%
L2	Desipramine	Norpramin	Tricyclic	0.3% - 0.9%
L2	Escitalopram	Lexapro	SSRI	5.2% - 7.9%
L2	Fluoxetine	Prozac	SSRI	7.7%
L2	Fluvoxamine	Luvox	SSRI	0.3% - 1.4%
L2	Imipramine	Tofranil	Tricyclic	0.1% - 4.4%
L2	Nortriptyline	Pamelor	Tricyclic	1.7% - 3.1%
L2	Paroxetine	Paxil	SSRI	1.2% - 2.8%
L2	Sertraline	Zoloft	SSRI	0.4% - 2.2%
L2	Trazodone	Desyrel	Atypical	2.8%
L3 – Moderately Safe				
L3	Bupropion*	Wellbutrin, Zyban	Atypical	0.2% - 1.9%
L3	Desvenlafaxine	Pristiq	SNRI	6.8% - 9.3%
L3	Duloxetine	Cymbalta	SNRI	0.1%
L3	Maprotiline	Ludimil	Tetracyclic	1.4%
L3	Mirtazapine	Remeron	Atypical	1.6% - 6.3%
L3	Venlafaxine	Effexor	SNRI	6.8% - 8.1%
L4 – Possibly Hazardous				
L4	Nefazodone*	Serzone	Atypical	1.2%
L4	Selegiline	Emsam	MAOI	Not reported
L5 - Contraindicated				
L5	Doxepin*	Sinequan	Tricyclic	1.2% - 3.0%
Unrated				
Unrated	Isocarboxazid	Marplan	MAOI	
Unrated	Phenelzine	Nardil	MAOI	
Unrated	Protriptyline	Vivactil	Tricyclic	
Unrated	Tranlycypromine	Parnate	MAOI	
Unrated	Trimipramine	Surmontil	Tricyclic	
Unrated	Vilazodone	Viibryd	Atypical	

*Complications Reported: Bupropion – one case of seizure; Doxepin – respiratory arrest, sedation, poor feeding, poor muscle tone; Nefazodone – sedation, failure to thrive, poor temperature control.

Additional Thoughts from the Emory WMHP

- **Bupropion & Milk Production** – One aspect of bupropion's mechanism is increase dopamine activity. Because dopamine blocks the activity of prolactin (i.e., the hormone that stimulates the breasts to produce milk), bupropion may, in theory, lower breast milk production. While this is a *theoretical*



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concern, it has not been our experience that bupropion significantly lowers breast milk production.

- **Bupropion & Seizure Risk** – Bupropion should be avoided for those at risk for seizures. We recommend that nursing while taking bupropion should be avoided for infants who have any history of seizures including febrile seizures or any family history of seizures in a parent or older sibling.
- **Nefazodone & Laboratory Monitoring** – Nefazodone requires laboratory monitoring of liver enzymes. We recommend that this laboratory testing should also be performed in nursing infants whose mothers are taking nefazodone.
- **MAOIs**- Although three of four MAOIs are unrated by Hale, he specifically states that MAOIs should not be administered to nursing mothers. Thus, they should be considered as having L5 safety ratings.

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